

The transformation of the cultural memory through a prism of the Cyberspace

Olga Loiko^{1,a}, Valentina Tolkacheva,¹ Maria Aleksandrova¹, Svetlana Dryga,¹ Tatiana Kostykova², Valerij Sizov³

¹ National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University, 30 Lenin Avenue, Tomsk 634034, Russia

² National Research Tomsk State University, 36 Lenin Avenue, Tomsk 634034, Russia

³ Tomsk State Pedagogical Universities, 60a Kievskaja Street, Tomsk 634061, Russia

Abstract. The paper considers the analysis of the cultural memory, which at the beginning of the XXI century underwent essential changes. The beginning of the memory research as a special phenomenon belongs to the Russian scientist, Nikolaj Miljukov [1] who has proved the emergence of social memory with the emergence of the intellectuals. In the article “Intellectuals and Historical Tradition”, Miljukov emphasizes the importance of social memory for the forward positive development of society. Since Halbwachs social memory gets the status of the independent research project. At the end of the XIX century the main theoretical concepts of social memory are formed: cultural and historical, semiotics, informational, psychological. The beginning of the third millennium is marked by the basic change of research trajectories of social memory. Specific research projects are put in the forefront. Such articles can be used as an example. The main research objective consists in the identification of the sociocultural bases of the transformation of social memory research. In modern investigations of the cultural memory, this phenomenon finds the new paradigmatic characteristics, which are fully submitted in the modern Internet space.

Introduction

At all times humans have used the elements of the environment to help them remember: by carving notches on a stick or tying knots in a handkerchief. The main idea of this period of time was not to forget. Nowadays we can observe people who try to hold in remembrance their best events, emotions or feelings. Instead of sticks and handkerchiefs we use books, video, the Internet. But not only the means have changed; the intentions are different too. Nowadays we have various points of view on the occurring the events. The historians, politicians, culturologists, journalists, eyewitnesses treat this or that event proceeding from their principles and intentions. All of them pursue the different aims. Therefore memory is non-uniform. This is social memory, memory of the society, memory of the culture. Our shift to operating within online spaces creates a significantly different environment for memory work. There are more records of what we have done, more channels of communication, and more ways of reconfiguring and reconstructing the given information [2]. On the one hand, we got more opportunities to remember a huge amount of information. On the other hand, we have a large

stream of inconsistent information; we have a means to distort the truth.

The study of the cultural memory has burgeoned in the last 20 years so much that one can even detect a growing resistance to some views of memory studies.

The investigation of cultural memory is very popular among different sciences, especially in politics. Nowadays it can be a very effective instrument in fight for the political leadership. But this investigation is also important for the modern culture, history, philosophy, sociology and so on [3].

Materials and methods

It is worth beginning with the studying of the historical aspect of sociocultural memory development. Social memory is often connected with the collective memory. Contemporary usage of the term “collective memory” is largely traceable to Emile Durkheim [4], who wrote extensively in “The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life” about commemorative rituals, and to his student, Maurice Halbwachs, who published a landmark study on The Social Frameworks of Memory in 1925. For

^a Corresponding author: loyko2011@yandex.ru

Halbwachs, who accepted Durkheim's sociological critique of philosophy, studying memory is not a matter of reflecting on the properties of the subjective mind; rather, memory is a matter of how minds work together in society, how their operations are structured by social arrangements: "It is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories" [5, p. 38]. Halbwachs' primary thesis is that human memory can only function within a collective context. Collective memory, Halbwachs asserts, is always selective; various groups of people have different collective memories, which in turn give rise to different modes of behaviour. Halbwachs shows, for example, how pilgrims to the Holy Land over the centuries evoked very different images of the events of Jesus' life; how wealthy old families in France have a memory of the past that diverges sharply from that of the nouveaux riches; and how working class construction of reality differs from those of their middle-class counterparts. Halbwachs thus argued that it is impossible for individuals to remember in any coherent and persistent fashion outside of their group contexts. Group memberships provide the materials for memory and prod the individual into recalling particular events and into forgetting others. Groups can even produce memories in individuals of events that they never experienced in any direct sense.

Halbwachs alternately referred to autobiographical memory, historical memory, history, and collective memory. Autobiographical memory is memory of those events that we ourselves experience (though those experiences are shaped by group memberships), while historical memory is memory that reaches us only through historical records. History is the remembered past to which we no longer have an organic relation - the past that is no longer an important part of our lives - while collective memory is the active past that forms our identities.

When speaking about the cultural memory, it is important to remember one more person. Most famously, and most generally, the French historian and editor Pierre Nora [6] has claimed that we spend so much time thinking about the past because there is so little of it left. Where we earlier lived suffused with past - the continuities of habit and custom - we now live disconnected from our pasts, seeing ourselves as radically different than our forebears. In Nora's terms, where once we were immersed in *milieux de memoire* (worlds of memory), we now consciously cultivate *lieux de memoire* (places of memory) because memory is now a special topic.

Speaking about the concept "cultural memory", it is necessary to take J. Assmann's ideas as a basis. At the end of the 20th century the German Egyptologist J. Assmann has submitted the theory of cultural memory in which he has designated problems of its studying in such scientific direction as "memory history". He describes cultural memory as a certain symbolical form of transfer and updating

of cultural meanings. This form is beyond experience of certain people or groups, keeps traditions of this society. Such memory is expressed in any memorial signs in memorable places, dates, ceremonies, in written, graphic and monumental monuments. The next generation is exposed to all examples of memory, and only those which became the most significant [7].

In any case the investigation of cultural memory is not only popular but also necessary topic for the future generations. Modern scientists understand this and try to analyse social memory from different points of view. Hewer and Roberts claim that "the term social memory refers to the dynamic interplay between history, culture and cognition. At the level of the individual, three sources of knowledge: history, collective memory and individual experience combine to create a subjective view of historical reality" [8]. The result of the interaction between history, collective memory and individual experience is a unique sense of reality and identity. Wertsch and Roediger [9] make a distinction between collective memory – a static body of knowledge – a collective remembering, an active reconstruction of the past that takes place in the present. Welzer [10] reminds us that while individual memory may be located within the neuronal structures of the brain, "social memory has no substrate" or "central organ" and it is therefore something that exists between people.

Cultural memory plays an increasing role in the political sphere. A group of scientists from Belgium [11] try to look at the situation in their country through the terms Collective memories and Collective emotions. They claim people emotions are not independent from their collective memory. Dutch speakers and French speakers in Belgium have different points of views on their past and different emotions. For example, the French speakers viewed Flemish actions as inspired by ethnic motives and judged them as illegitimate, whereas Dutch speakers saw the conflict as a legitimate collective movement for the social emancipation of the Flemings. Memories and society integration issues in the context of inter-generation dialogue.

There are many examples proving that the government, mass media, civil associations, the mass culture and other forces move the memory policy. They introduce the amendments in those events which are important for a political victory. We can pay attention to the latest events in Ukraine. Each of interested parties represents this or that event proceeding from their own benefit, sometimes forgetting about lives and destinies of people who became involuntary participants of their political and geopolitical war. The Russian politicians appeal to the memory of friendship of our people; the Ukrainian politicians see Russia as the enemy and appeal to other reminiscences. At the moment cultural memory plays a key role in a choice of the Ukrainian people of their own way of the development.

Thus, cultural memory, specifically incorrect cultural memory in the face of contrary physical evidence, can be an instrument in creating and perpetuating destructive conflicts [12].

Theory of memory in culture-historical psychology

It would be precipitately to claim that the problem of memory in the cultural and historical psychology in its social context did not capture the researchers' attention. But the paradox of the analysis of this problem consists in the fact that the analysis of memory is still being executed within the framework of psychology, informatics, history, theory and practice of teaching. However, there is a need of an integral comprehension of memory as a special event, which has deep socio-spiritual essence. It is inseparably connected with the content and forms of consciousness. Consciousness is investigated in the context of any philosophical system, and memory is investigated only as a deep structure of society's psychic world.

A productive effort of solving the problems of memory investigation outside the pure psychologism belongs to Halbwachs, who put an idea about social frameworks of memory, which are able to define its nature and serve as a peculiar instrument for reconstruction of past images that are adequate to the dominating ideas of the given society inside each epoch. In his early work "Social frameworks of memory" he made a conclusion about dependence of the individual's recollections from his social guidelines; he claims that human memory due to its collective remembrances connects the past and the present together. In the work "Collective memory" M. Halbwachs analyses collective and individual memory in detail, emphasizing recollections of the childhood, which later adds to the memory of an adult. Coherence of the age recollections analysis lets him elicit one more type of structuring human memory depending on age. In human memory investigation he presumes to pay attention on the significant feature of memory: early childhood recollections are the brightest, the most significant for a subject, at the same time grown-up's recollections that affect the different sides of his everyday life erases from memory quicker. To explain this event relying only on the strength of human psychological peculiarities would be hastily. A statement that eternal and ageless soul that has a volume, which fixes its mental capacity, possesses a universal memory is more motivated, we think.

Social memory is often connected with the different directions of the culture. It can play a big role in the art, for example in the restoration of damaged paintings. Artworks can serve as evocative links between the past and the present. There are many examples of restorations not only of a painting but also of memory of the generations. Kim Muir collected some interesting cases about it.

As an example Kim Muir tells the story about the restoration of the Piero della Francesca's portrait. When this portrait of Sigismondo Malatesta was treated in the 1980s, heavy-handed retouching that had covered original paint was removed, exposing marks of wear and tear as well as deliberate mutilations in the form of X-shaped scratches on the eye and mouth of the sitter. These were considered to be evidence of a kind of condemnation of Malatesta, the famously unscrupulous ruler of fifteenth-century Rimini, and were not retouched, leaving them visible on the surface of the painting [13].

Conclusion: Cultural memory and cyberspace

Transformation processes of the maintenance of cultural memory in the Cyberspace act as the dominating way of the formation of social identity. The time of the common memory and, respectively, undifferentiated identity has lost its positions. In modern society there is a gap in understanding, estimating and interpretations not only the remote past, but also the actual present. For the maintenance of a steady condition of society the events of the cultural memory have to be built and interpreted so that members of social group felt participation in the past as of the vital space.

The modern Internet society allows joining into the processes of formation of social identity to almost unlimited number of subjects, thereby promoting formation of its active participation and partnership in processes of understanding of the valuable and semantic world of cultural memory.

The emergence of a wide variety of machines, trains and media like a radio, phones, afterwards the Internet marked the start of the fundamentally new time – era of electrification of the city. This phenomenon marked the beginning of the obvious parallel shift in the social relationships of space and time, on which the Newton's world was based. It is a long time since inhabitants perceived the city and urban space as motionless and static substance. Electric light with its enormous intensity, set in motion, complicated phytogeography of vision and visibility, which has become an integral part of the urban landscape. Nowadays individuals are immersed in the electric light; they cannot imagine themselves in the centre of this system even from a subjective point of view. Modern city is a media-architectural complex, so the spatial order lost its undeniable power.

Nowadays there is a phenomenon called cyberspace, which is able to keep and save collective memory's architecture. The term was first introduced by cyberpunk science fiction writer William Gibson in the 1980s. In academic circles and activist Commune the term "Cyberspace" started to become a de facto synonym for the Internet, and later the World Wide Web, during the 1990s. Gibson marked later: "All I knew about the word cyberspace when I

coined it was that it seemed like an effective buzzword. It seemed evocative and essentially meaningless. It was suggestive of something, but had no real semantic meaning, even for me, as I saw it emerge on the page” [14]. It considers the cyberspace from the position of the urban space and architecture. Thus, nowadays architecture has not ceased to be an enormous system of the city and the custodian of individual memory and collective memory as well. But, at the same time the phenomenon called cyberspace builds up another kind of architecture, immaterial one. This phenomenon marked the beginning of the obvious parallel shift in the social relationships of urban space and time. Both the interpretation of the term and the place of this phenomenon in real life make many contradictions about the meaning of cyberspace.

Architect Michal Benedict considers that cyberspace is realization of our ancient dreams of overcoming the ‘impediments of the matter’. He assured that “the design of cyberspace is after all a design of another life-world, a parallel universe, offering the intoxicating prospects of actually fulfilling – with a technology very nearly achieved – a dream thousands of years old: the dream of transcending the physical world” [15]. Then Marcus Novak shares his idea about cybernetic understanding of information as a pure pattern: “A liquid architecture in cyberspace is completely dematerialized architecture” [16, p.251].

Segah Sak completely enough and argued explores cyberspace in his dissertation “Cyberspace as a locus for urban collective memory” [17]. Her investigation shed the light on links between cyberspace and memory, and between cyberspace and urban space. The apparent advantage of this research is the analysis of collective memory within the context of cyberspace. Sak notes that “cyberspace is more than a storage space of those figures of memory and individual memories. In addition, the data that this memory holds is broadcasted and is accordingly accessible. Cyberspace enables collection, copying and consumption of this data independent on the physical and chronic limitations, and opens the way for global sharing” [17 p. 69]. Author substantiates the idea that the urban environment of the modern city can become a place of recreating a sort of “locuses” of collective memories. Memory space is constructed by pre-designed aesthetic canons. Primarily the design of this construction must correspond to positive memories of a human. Building cyberspace of collective memory and placing it on the Internet, make it more accessible to the majority of users. Further, Sak notes that cyberspace as collective memory should be regarded from two positions: internal and external. In his investigation clearly defined that “collective memory is internal to groups of people which the memory is of. That is to say, collective memory is the image of past in the totality of collective thought and behaviour. Cyberspace is external to the same groups of people, as a notepad

that helps remembering is external to human mind” [17].

Cyberspace, due to its emergence, marked a new era of computerization and created a new space for human existence. Today, even the streets as a common space for communication, have lost their function. Internet space and IT technologies, in which man is completely immersed and located, replaced public places. Perhaps, cyberspace is a phenomenon that will allow us to get rid of our “mortal body” and immerse into the surreal world, which exists, but in the abstract, like a hallucination. But is it the vocation of cyberspace? This phenomenon was not invented artificial and it is not an integral datum of the human being at all times. Thus, we should figure out how to understand and use intelligently this phenomenon, so that it has brought benefits in our lives, not chaos and demoralization of mankind. The intensive development of social networks in the Cyberspace has created another problem - the transformation of cultural memory. The uncontrolled use of this resource as a sounding board for their ideas, thoughts and reminiscences creates prerequisites for the distortion of views about past events. On the one hand, this is a subjective evaluation of events that may be competent. On the other hand, social networks may become a means of manipulating the consciousness of an entire country in the hands of politicians. This may be a serious threat not only to cultural memory, but also for the further development of society.

Conclusion

As a conclusion we can claim that cultural memory investigation has a big value for the development of the society at all. For this purpose it is important to pay attention to different sides of cultural memory. It is worth establishing connection between different sciences with memory studies. It will help to understand and to estimate the events adequately. In summing up the place and the role of cultural memory in contemporary Cyberspace we conclude: the importance of the cyberspace in the transmission of values and meanings of the world of cultural memory increases. The content of cultural memory is moved to the Internet and, so it provokes arising problem of “filling” the Internet with accurate and reliable information about the realities of social life and society. With the emergence of the phenomenon of cyberspace, we can say that a person more and more rarely communicates with other individuals in real life, now all social interactions have moved into the plane of the IT-technologies. Cyberspace, not public places, is an area of social interaction. Today, the researchers of cultural memory raise the problem: how to present the content of cultural memory in conditions of cyberspace.

Acknowledgment

This article was prepared with the support of research grants of the Russian Humanitarian Foundation “Social memory space on the Internet as a resource for the formation of collective identity” 15-13-70001.

References

1. N. Milykov, *Voprosy Philosophy*, **7** (1991)
2. T. Fawns, *Inter-Disciplinary Press*, **7** (2013)
3. O.Loiko, Lambert Academic Publishing GmbH&Co. Kg, (2012)
4. E. Durkheim, G. London, *Allen & Cambridge* (1976)
5. M. Halbwachs, *Chicago and London* (University of Chicago Press, 1998)
6. P. Nora, *Representations*, **26**, 7-24 (1989)
7. J. Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Munich: Beck'sche, 1992)
8. C. J. Hewer, R. Roberts, *Culture & Psychology*, **18(2)**, 167-183 (2012)
9. J. V. Wertsch, H. L. Roediger III, *Memory*, **16(3)**, 318-326 (2008)
10. H. Welzer, *Memory studies*, **3(1)**, 5-17 (2010)
11. L. Anderlini, D. Gerardi, R. Lagunoff, *Review of Economic Dynamics*, **13(3)**, 559-574 (2010)
12. D. Hanovs, *SHS Web of Conferences. EDP Sciences*, **10**, 00012 (2014)
13. M. Kim, *Principle, Dilemmas and Uncomfortable Truths*, **7** (2009)
14. W. Gibson, *The New York Times Magazine* (1996)
15. M. Benedict, *First steps* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991)
16. M. Novak *Cyberspace* (MA: MIT Press, 1991)
17. M. Benedict, *First steps* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991)
18. S. Sak, *Cyberspace as a locus for urban collective memory* (2015) [<http://www.thesis.bilkent.edu.tr/0006303.pdf> Accessed on April 23, 2015]